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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 318902

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, AF, UR

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET

TRCOPS

REF: STATE 308306 (NOTAL)

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1. (C) - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. THIS IS AN ACTION MESSAGE. POSTS SHOULD SEEK EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO BRIEF HOST GOVERNMENTS ABOUT SOVIET PARTIAL WITHDRAWALS, DRAWING FROM TALKING POINTS IN PARA.

4 BELOW, AS APPROPRIATE.

3. REPORTED ACTIVITIES AT SHINDAND AND ANNOUNCED SOVIET INTENTION TO ALLOW PRESS COVERAGE OF WITHDRAWAL OF SIX SOVIET REGIMENTS FROM AFGHANISTAN INDICATE THE SOVIETS

ARE INTENT ON MAKING HEADLINES THAT WILL SHIFT ONUS FOR LACK OF PROGRESS TOWARD A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT AWAY FROM THEMSELVES, PUT PRESSURE ON PAKISTAN AND THE US FOR SOME "RECIPROCAL" GESTURE, AND UNDERCUT SUPPORT FOR THE ANNUAL UNGA AFGHANISTAN RESOLUTION. EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE INTRODUCED SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL NUMBERS OF TANKS, ARTILLERY, AND ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS INTO

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR	
FORWARDED BY <u>EC</u>	DATE <u>7/29/87</u>
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AFGHANISTAN SINCE GORBACHEV'S JULY 28 SPEECH FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF HAVING THEM "WITHDRAWN". WE INTEND TO COMMENT PUBLICLY ON THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL AND PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE BRIEFING TO THE PRESS ONCE WITHDRAWALS ACTUALLY BEGIN AND [REDACTED] (G-X) (C-XS)

4. BEGIN SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS:

-ON JULY 28 IN VLADIVOSTOK, GORBACHEV INTER ALIA ANNOUNCED THAT BY YEAR'S END SIX SOVIET REGIMENTS - ONE TANK, 3 AIR DEFENSE, AND 2 MOTORIZED RIFLE REGIMENTS - WOULD BE WITHDRAWN FROM AFGHANISTAN

-GORBACHEV CHARACTERIZED THE PROPOSED WITHDRAWAL AS

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"INTENDED TO HASTEN A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT" AND CALLED FOR A RECIPROCAL STEP IN THE FORM OF CURTAILMENT OF OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE.

-THIS ANNOUNCEMENT HAS FORMED THE CENTERPIECE OF A SOVIET CAMPAIGN TO SHIFT ONUS FOR LACK OF PROGRESS TOWARD A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT AWAY FROM THEMSELVES, PUT PRESSURE ON PAKISTAN AND THE US FOR SOME "RECIPROCAL" GESTURE, AND UNDERCUT SUPPORT FOR THE ANNUAL UNGA RESOLUTION.

-DURING US-USSR EXPERTS TALKS IN MOSCOW, SEPT. 2, THE SOVIETS REPEATEDLY CITED THE SIX REGIMENT ANNOUNCEMENT AS

CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF SOVIET SERIOUSNESS IN SEEKING A SETTLEMENT; WHILE THEY ADMITTED THIS WAS NOT A "RADICAL" STEP, THEY CALLED FOR A US/PAK RECIPROCAL STEP IN RESPONSE.

-OUR POSITION IS THAT THE PARTIES AT GENEVA HAVE ALREADY AGREED ON THE ISSUE OF THE CESSATION OF SO-CALLED "OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE". IF THE SOVIETS WISH TO HASTEN A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, THEY SHOULD TABLE AT GENEVA A SHORT TIMETABLE FOR THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF THEIR TROOPS.

-TASS HAS ANNOUNCED THAT WITHDRAWAL OF THE SIX REGIMENTS WILL BEGIN OCTOBER 15 AND BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THIS MONTH. CONSTRUCTION OF REVIEWING STANDS COUPLED WITH RECENT EXPEDITIOUS APPROVAL AND ISSUANCE OF ENTRY VISAS TO JOURNALISTS TO VISIT KABUL, CONFIRM THAT THE SOVIETS WILL SEEK MAXIMUM PUBLICITY FOR THE WITHDRAWAL.

-THE TROOP WITHDRAWAL GESTURE APPEARS TO BE MILITARILY INSIGNIFICANT AND PART OF A CONTINUING SOVIET EFFORT TO RESHAPE ITS ARMY IN AFGHANISTAN INTO A MORE EFFECTIVE ANTI-GUERILLA FORCE.

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-FOUR OF THE SIX REGIMENTS -- 3 AIR DEFENSE, 1 TANK -- HAVE NOT BEEN ACTIVE IN COMBAT. THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE CLEARLY HAS NO AIR FORCE; THE SOVIETS' SOLE REMAINING

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TANK REGIMENT HAS LONG BEEN UNDERSTRENGTH AND ITS TANKS
DISPERSED AND LARGELY EMPLOYED IN STATIC DEFENSE ROLES
WHERE MORTARS AND MINES WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE.
-IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER THE TWO MOTORIZED RIFLE
REGIMENTS WILL BE WITHDRAWN IN PART OR EVEN IN FULL.
WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT, SINCE GORBACHEV'S JULY 28
VLADIVOSTOK SPEECH IN WHICH HE ANNOUNCED THE WITHDRAWALS.

THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL NUMBERS OF TANKS,
ARTILLERY, AND ARMORED EQUIPMENT INTRODUCED INTO
AFGHANISTAN.

-BOTH THE SECRETARIES OF STATE AND DEFENSE HAVE INDICATED
TO THE PRESS - IN A GENERAL WAY - THAT THE SOVIETS MAY BE
REINFORCING THEIR MILITARY CAPABILITIES AS THEY PREPARE
FOR A VERY PUBLIC "WITHDRAWAL."

-WE WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO ASSESS THE NATURE OF THESE
DEPLOYMENTS ONCE THE ALLEGED WITHDRAWALS ACTUALLY BEGIN.
AT THAT TIME, WE INTEND TO COMMENT PUBLICLY ON THE SOVIET
WITHDRAWAL AND PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE BRIEFING TO THE
PRESS ON EVOLVING SOVIET TACTICS AND MILITARY
CAPABILITIES IN AFGHANISTAN.

-CLEARLY, THE SOVIETS ARE USING THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT SIX
REGIMENTS WILL BE REMOVED FROM AFGHANISTAN AS THE
CENTERPIECE IN A CAMPAIGN AIMED AT OBTAINING THEIR
CONTINUED REFUSAL TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE AND
REALISTIC WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE AT GENEVA. SHULTZ

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